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Caleb Fleming
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Natural and revealed Religion at Variance:

A CURIOUS

CONTROVERSY

BETWEEN THE

Biſhop of London,

AND

Dr. Thomas Sherlock,

FOUND IN THE

Fourth Volume of ſeveral Discourses

Preached at the

TEMPLE-CHURCH,

BY THE LATE

MASTER of the TEMPLE.

Caleb Fleming

A juſt conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by, in all particular matters of religion, and the only thing that can ſecure us from either atheiſm or ſuperſtition. Dr. Sherlock.

The fall of man was the loſs of ſo many ſubjects to Chriſt, their natural Lord, under God, in virtue of his having created them. Biſhop of London.

LONDON:

Printed for W. Fenner, at the Angel and Bible in *Pater-noſter-row*; and C. Henderson under the *Royal-Exchange*. 1758. [Price Sixpence.]

Natural and revealed Religion at Variance, &c.

WE ſhall endeavour to ſtate the controverſy between the *Biſhop of London*, and his opponent, Dr. *Thomas Sherlock*; as it is concerned with ſome principles of natural and revealed religion.

It is not expected that in his Lordſhip's advanced age, he ſhould retain that ſtrength of recollection and judgment, ſufficient to render him capable of making proper diſtinction and deciſion in the merits of the debate.

Obſervations had been made, by the reverend Mr. *Charles Bulkley*, on his three former diſcourſes;—but, as he is no other, nor any better than a little ſchiſmatical diſſenting teacher, it was not likely his *Lordſhip*, or his *Editors* ſhould ſo far forget themſelves, and ſtep out of the road of prieſthood, to take notice of a writer, who was ſo ſtupid, as to maintain, that the revelation has been made to man, as well by nature and reaſon, as by divinely inſpired writings. And that theſe do and muſt univerſally harmonize.

Or, that the light of nature has not been wholly and abſolutely inſufficient for the purpoſes of religion. — A man of ſuch a fanatical caſt, richly deſerved the inattention of eccleſiaſtical contempt.

Dr. *Sherlock* has indeed confeſſed, in this fourth Volume, that

" Cornelius *was a Gentile, no obſerver of the law of* Moſes." p. 328.

But though this conceſſion would imply, perhaps, full as much, as that fanatical teacher can aſk for: yet it muſt have far more ſignificance *where* it is found, than an hundred ſuch propoſitions in his inſolent performance.

As to the doctrine of *remiſſion*; a very capital doctrine in the religion of man, *Bulkley*, it is true, pointed out much obſcurity, and great confuſion in the Biſhop's three diſcourſes, as they had to do with this doctrine: but that was extremely trifling, and deſerved no ſort of correction in the fourth Volume; on the contrary, it is ſpit upon with the utmoſt prelatical indignation. And now

The Biſhop declares,

" *Chriſt has reconciled God to us. He has* " *procured our pardon.*" p. 103. This, you may rely upon as an undoubted truth; for the Biſhop has ſaid it. He has thus peremptorily, and without any heſitation ſaid it. The truth you have now *in verbum ſacerdotis.*

dotis. Who would dare to diſpute the certainty? None; unleſs he chooſes to be church-damned. — ſwallow without maſtication, or examination. —— Read not the Scriptures — they may raiſe ſcruples in you, for theſe have never ſaid any thing like it. They report the *enmity* as lying wholly in the ſinner. And accordingly, they beſeech *him* to be reconciled to God. —— But then, the apoſtles *were but apoſtles.* And though they write according to the beſt of their judgment, yet they never ſo much as mention any attempt ever made, either by their maſter, or any other, *to reconcile God to men.* Nor have given one hint of our pardon being procured, any other way than by our perſonal repentance and reformation. But who can help their ignorance? Had they lived in later ages, and been favoured with the advantage of learned interpretations and commentaries on their writings, they might have known much better. —

As to ſuch who want to ſee the evidence of the truth of this propoſition, they ſeem too impertinently curious; and therefore may expect an epiſcopal reproof.

So the good Biſhop, watchful over his flock,—

" *You cannot ſee that the death of Chriſt was a proper means to reconcile God to ſinners.* —*Does it belong to you, or to your offended maſter, to judge what are the proper means of reconciliation?*" p. 103.

" *The*

" *The counſels of God are too deep to be fathomed by the ſhort line of human reaſon: and ſurely this can be no news, no ſurprize to a conſidering man, who ſees every day the ſame truth confirmed in an hundred inſtances.*" p. 104.

What then are there of thoſe curious inquiries which we ſhould diſcourage? Has God made a myſtery, an impenetrable myſtery of the means and method of our comfort, peace and life? He has not hid from us the means of our temporal animal ſupply and ſuccour, nouriſhment and ſupport. And has he been leſs liberal in opening to us the methods and means of our ſpiritual ſupport? With the *prelate*'s good leave, we are here too much intereſted, to admit of any thing dark, dubious, or uncertain. And we now naturally expect full information in the terms of pardon or remiſſion. The tranquility of our minds does abſolutely depend on the ſatisfactory judgment we form of the term or condition. And verily, the bleſſed Jeſus has divinely ſhewn us, the true nature of remiſſion; that it wholly depends on our own penitence and diſpoſition to forgive thoſe who offend us. That prayer ſo univerſally made by Chriſtians — *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:* is in full evidence. And eſpecially, as we add, our bleſſed Lord's own enforcement; *for if ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly father*

ther will alſo forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your father forgive your treſpaſſes.

But notwithſtanding this plainneſs and ſimplicity in the doctrine of remiſſion, and its univerſal inſtruction, there muſt be ſomething ſuppoſed in it very myſterious, elſe it will not require the explications and illuſtrations of the learned. *Prieſtcraft* can have no advantage for its own ſupport and influence, if once the doctrine of remiſſion be made intelligible, and as clear to the clown as to the cleric. All the power of ſuperſtitious tyranny becomes a phantom, if nothing more than perſonal penitence, is the ſtipulated term of pardon in the divine conſtitutions. But the full manifeſtation of this doctrine, was reſerved to be the glory of the Goſpel Scheme. And becauſe the divine Jeſus has given mankind the utmoſt aſſurance of it, he has deſerved the name of a redeemer and ſaviour.—

It is not becauſe of the darkneſs, or myſtery that covers moral truth from the eye of man, that it deſerves from us any veneration. For the more remote it lies from the underſtanding or diſcernment of man, and the more remote it will be from his attention or concern.

Notwithſtanding this, the *ſecond* and *third* of the Biſhop's diſcourſes contain a miſrepreſentation of the Goſpel doctrine.

Dr. *Sher-*

Dr. *Sherlock*'s obſervation is here pertinent.

" *There is nothing more complained of, and yet nothing more commonly practiſed, among all parties, than the perverting the Holy Scriptures, to ſupport and maintain the opinions and doctrines, which are the diſtinguiſhing marks and characters of different communions. This holds true of all ſects, in proportion as they have departed from the genuine doctrines and practices of Chriſtianity, for all ſects equally labour to maintain their tenets, and more or leſs pervert the Scriptures, as they have more or leſs gone aſtray from it.*", p. 169.

Methinks we may be allowed to underſtand the Biſhop, as very intimately concerned in this obſervation. At leaſt, he will allow us to conclude, that as he is a leader of one ſect, ſo far as that ſect, to which he belongs, has gone aſtray from the ſenſe of Scripture; ſo far he has equally laboured to maintain thoſe tenets which pervert the Scriptures. His *four Volumes of diſcourſes* may be ſubpœnied in evidence.

Dr. *Sherlock* denies that the *Biſhop of London* has any authority belonging to his interpretations.

" *The apoſtles themſelves were but teachers and witneſſes of the faith, and had no authority or commiſſion to make new articles of faith.*" p. 315.

And

And in the Biſhop's twelfth diſcourſe, the *Doctor* thus contends for the New Teſtament writings themſelves, as *the faith once delivered to the ſaints:* and ſais, "*if they* (*the papiſts*) *urge us with the authority of the Church which has received their articles? Our anſwer is, no church has, nor have all churches together, any authority to make articles of faith*; *that* Chriſt Jeſus was the author and the finiſher of the faith, *to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken.*" p. 336.

This is truly proteſtant, and worthy a Chriſtian teacher; but how far it is conſiſtent with a prelate on a civil eſtabliſhment, who has ſubſcribed the 20th *article*, and encourages others to do it, is not ſo evident; for that *article* does expreſsly affirm, that "*the Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith.*" And the 8th *article* affirms, "*the three creeds*, Nice *creed*, Athanaſius *creed, and that which is commonly called the* Apoſtles *creed, ought throughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by moſt certain warrants of holy Scripture.*" How does the Subſcription of theſe articles agree with the *Biſhop of London*'s ſincerity, when his *Doctor* declares, that no church has, nor have all churches together, any authority to make articles of faith? If any ſort of ſolution can be given to this, it will, I am perſuaded, rather aſtoniſh than

convince a mind that has been accuſtomed to reaſoning, and can aſſent only with evidence.

We will now proceed to ſome other obſervations made by this celebrated writer, in this *fourth* volume of his diſcourſes. They are laid down by him as fundamental principles, which govern the mind of man in its religious conceptions and operations. Take the following Specimen from

Doctor *Sherlock.*

" *A juſt conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion. This juſt conception of God, is the right rule to form our judgments by, in all particular matters of religion, and the only thing that can ſecure us from atheiſm or ſuperſtition.*" p. 132.

Again, " *Take from the notion of God any of his moral perfections that belong to it, and you will find ſuch alteration muſt influence religion likewiſe, which will degenerate in the ſame proportion as the notion of God is corrupted.*" p. 141.

Again, " *Natural religion is the foundation upon which revelation ſtands: and therefore revelation can never ſuperſede natural religion without deſtroying itſelf.*" p. 143.

Again, " *The goſpel was given not to exclude, but to aſſiſt the exerciſe of reaſon.*" p. 153.

And once more, "*The Goſpel has all the perfection requiſite in a law deſigned for the government*

vernment and inſtruction of rational creatures." p. 156.

The *Biſhop of London* thus argues:

" *Does it belong to you, or to your offended maſter, to judge what are the proper means of reconciliation? If to him only, (and ſurely that is the caſe) why do you debate a point* (of revelation) *in which you have no intereſt or concern, further than to accept the bleſſing, upon whatever motives it was granted?*"

I muſt beg leave to remark, though the Biſhop does not put in the words *of revelation*, which I have inſerted between crotchets, yet every intelligent reader will ſee *the point* forbidden to be debated, is a point of the laſt importance in the revelation, as it reſpects the terms of remiſſion; but how this ſort of repreſentation will agree in the Goſpel, with the propoſitions laid down by Doctor *Sherlock*, as the fundamentals of all religion, is a matter of further conſideration.

The Biſhop

Has given us a diſcourſe, in four parts, upon *Philippians* ii. 6 —— 11. The *Doctor* begins with telling his audience, " *The words now read to you, have been ſtrongly debated by chriſtians differing in opinion about the perſon and dignity of our Bleſſed Saviour; and, as they are often handled, lead more certainly to the knowledge of the interpreter's opinion than of the Apoſtle's.*

I intend not to preſs them into the ſervice of any particular opinion, but fairly to expound them; and to infer nothing from them, but what may evidently be ſhewn to be in them, even by the neceſſity of the Apoſtle's argument." p. 1, 2.

But if the *Arian* hypotheſis did ever diſcover its moſt flagrant abſurdities in any writer, it muſt be owned in the epiſcopal parts of theſe diſcourſes. Had I been ever ſo much prejudiced in the opinion, they would have alarmed my jealouſies, and created in me ſtrong ſuſpicions of error and deluſion. But let the reader judge for himſelf by the following citations made from the Biſhop.

"*St.* Paul *ſays, he did not greedily retain his* equality *with God, which, ſuppoſing the equality to belong to him, is a very great, the greateſt inſtance of humility.*" p. 24.

"*The humility of Chriſt conſiſted in changing willingly a glorious for an inglorious condition.*"

"*The* form of God *belongs to God only.* p. 34."

"*Chriſt appeared under the Old Teſtament, in the real majeſty of his Father.*" ibid.

The Doctor ſais,

"*The* faſhion of a man *denotes thoſe proper and diſtinguiſhing characters which belong to a man as ſuch, by which he is known to be what he is; that is, by which he is known to be a man, and not any other kind of being.*" p. 41.

He

" *He was not only a man in appearance and in likeneſs, but in reality, having the ſame common nature, diſtinguiſhed by the ſame ſpecific difference.*" p. 32.

And yet ſais the Biſhop.

" *His nature he could not lay aſide.*" p. 33. He laid aſide nothing but the faſhion; "*for that equality which he had laid aſide, being nothing elſe but the σχημα Θεῦ, the faſhion, or truly divine and majeſtic appearance of God.*" ibid.

Before we are told, *the form of God* belongs to God only; and the *faſhion of a man*, is that by which he is known to be a man. And Jeſus Chriſt was not only a man in appearance but in reality, having the ſame common nature, diſtinguiſhed by the ſame ſpecific difference!

Again ſais the Biſhop.

" *Jeſus Chriſt emptied himſelf of what? not of his being or nature, but of the glories and majeſty belonging to him.*" p. 42.

And, " *The very Lord of life, upholding all things by the word of his power, was ſuperior to the neceſſity of human nature, and ſubject to death only becauſe he choſe to die.*" p. 49.

" *It was humility therefore to become man. After he was man, it was humility to die.*" ib.

Can any rational ſpirit go over theſe repreſentations without ſome diſguſt? The Legerdemain of a Juggler, the Magic of a Sorcerer,

Sorcerer, could not more amaze and aſtoniſh! nor leſs enlighten and inform the human mind. And theſe things drop from the ſame pen, that ſais, "*Juſt conceptions of God are the foundation of all religion.*"

"*And this juſt conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in all particular matters of religion, and the only thing which can ſecure us from Atheiſm and Superſtition. That the Goſpel was given, not to exclude, but to aſſiſt the exerciſe of reaſon.*"

But the Biſhop is yet more extravagant if poſſible.

"*Something of this ſort ſeems to be intimated in Scripture. The fall of man was the loſs of ſo many ſubjects to the Chriſt, their natural Lord, under God, in virtue of his having created them.*" p. 83.

Here is the character of creator affixed to Chriſt, and of ſovereign too, in vertue of his having created. How this *Lordſhip*, grounded on creation, can be ſaid to be under God, is not eaſy to conceive or imagine. Is not this to take from God thoſe very excellencies and perfections, which are the true foundation of all religion? And how was Jeſus the natural Lord of men by creation, and they his ſubjects, with another God, to whom this univerſal creator himſelf was ſubordinate?

Dr. *Sherlock* ſomewhat varies,

"*God*

" *God put all things immediately under him, making him head over all, and conſequently entitled him to that worſhip and to thoſe honours, which were not before paid him. Chriſt Jeſus was indeed ſubſervient to the father in the creation of the worlds.*" p. 55.

I have ſaid, the Doctor differs from the Biſhop, and with reaſon have I ſaid it: for though they here agree in ſaying, that Chriſt was *under God* and *ſubſervient* to the father in creating: yet, they widely diſagree in affirming the Creator, the natural Lord of the creation, who by man's fall loſt ſo many ſubjects, is, in conſequence of being made head over all, entitled to that worſhip, and to thoſe honours which were never before paid him. At leaſt, if here be no contradiction, there is confuſion: for it will not be eaſy to form any notion of a father or a God, that was not the creator and natural Lord, *only looking on*, i. e. in vertue of his not having created! And if the father be the natural Lord becauſe he was ſuperior to the creator, and the Creator was indeed ſubſervient to the father in the creation of the worlds; it will then be evident, as far as language can make it ſo, that the terms, *under God* and *ſubſervient to the father*, and *God's putting all things immediately under him*, and *making him head over all*, do import and expreſsly denote, an *inequality* between God the father and the creator.

creator. And that consequently, there is dependence and derivation.

No; sais the Bishop.

" *The glories of nature, and the glories of office are very different and distinct glories. The apostle considers Jesus Christ as the same person in all his different states, of glory, humility, and exaltation: the same nature which he had being in the form of God, the same he had in his state of humiliation, and now has in his state of exaltation.——The exaltation of any person does not consist in a change of nature, or natural powers, but in acquired honours and authority. When a man is raised to be a King, he is still a man, without increase or diminution, though he receives new honours and new authority.*" p. 53, 54.

But what sais the Doctor?

" *Thus much we collect from the apostle's reasoning; and discern plainly; that the* pre-eminence *of Christ as head of the church, is connected and related to his pre-eminence as head of the creation.*" p. 84.

We have here in both such an association of ideas, as seems to resemble the *reveries* of an Enthusiast, who is transported with illuminations and visions! and who shook hands, before he ascended these heights, with reason and common sense, scorning to be confined to any of the laws of nature.

This

This diſtinction of the glories of nature and office, is to effect miraculous things! and will give us a key to enter the chambers of the marvellous. But there is ſomething unlucky, in the illuſtration, of a man raiſed to be a King. For though he has no change made thereby, in his natural powers; yet, there is a confeſſed acquiſition of honour and authority. He receives new honour and new authority. And they who confer it, the people, are ſuppoſed the fountain of power. From them he derives his authority. But in the caſe before us, Jeſus Chriſt is not only ſaid to be equal with God, but to be God. "*Foraſmuch as the form of God belongs to God only.*" p. 34. And not only ſo, "*but under the Old Teſtament he appeared in the real majeſty of his father.*" ibid. We might therefore aſk, what poſſible change of condition and ſtate, he could be liable unto? Is it ſuppoſeable, that God the father could have paſſed through the ſtates of glory, humiliation, and exaltation? Or have become a man, not only in appearance, but in reality, having the ſame common nature? Will not the Doctor ſay, this would be blaſphemy to affirm of the one God the father? Then we may affirm it blaſphemy, to ſay this of the creator of all things. For he who made the worlds, and who is not only equal with God, but God, could not

poſſibly ſuſtain any alterations; unleſs he could ceaſe to be, what in nature he immutably and eternally is. And an acquiſition of honours and authority, cannot be ſuppoſed of the creator of all things.

Beſides, we ſhall find the Biſhop confeſſing, that his Chriſt was abſolutely incapable of the inconveniences and infirmities of human nature; and conſequently, the whole of his emptying of himſelf, was no ſuch thing as any degree of emptying; but he remained the ſame almighty, and all-perfect being he ever was! and though in reality a man, yet he was no way affected with the frailties of humanity: "*For the very Lord of life, upholding all things by the word of his power, was ſuperior to the neceſſity of human nature, and ſubject to death, only becauſe he choſe to die.*" p. 49.

Thus the Biſhop has repreſented the whole of the tranſmigration of the God, into no more than the appearance of a change; and has, at one ſingle ſtroke, daſhed and blotted out the whole of the ſufferings and humiliations of Jeſus Chriſt. —

There is another abſurdity, among a thouſand, that crowd around the Biſhop's interpretations, which ſhould by no means be omitted, and that is, "*The fall of man was the loſs of ſo many ſubjects to the Chriſt, their natural Lord, under God, in virtue of his having created them.*" p. 83. And yet,

"*under*

" *under the Old Teſtament he appeared in the real majeſty of his father.*" p. 34.

The Biſhop has made him ample amends for his original loſs, for he has given him the poſſeſſion of the real majeſty of his father, antecedently to his changing his glorious for an inglorious condition: or, before " *his having* the faſhion of a man, *which denotes thoſe proper and diſtinguiſhing characters which belong to a man as ſuch, by which he is known to be a man, and not any other kind of being.*" p. 41.

So that we have more of the marvellous than might at firſt be imagined, for beſides the creator's diveſting himſelf of his glory and majeſty as the creator of all things, taking this faſhion of a man, he diveſted himſelf alſo of that real majeſty of his father, in which he had appeared under the Old Teſtament! How he came by that real majeſty of his father, I do not remember the *Biſhop* has told us. But I ſhould imagine, that he had, in his own conceptions, inveſted Jeſus Chriſt with theſe ſupreme honours, in order to compenſate the loſs he had ſuſtained, as creator, by the fall of man, who had revolted thereby from their ſubjection to their natural Lord, who was ſo in virtue of his having created them. But then, I have thus quite loſt all idea of the father. He becomes abſorbed in the perſon of Chriſt, who appeared under the

Old Teſtament in the real majeſty of the father.—Well; grant that during this diſpenſation there was no other God but Jeſus Chriſt the creator and natural Lord, wholly poſſeſſed of the real majeſty of the father: how comes it to paſs, the Old Teſtament writings never take the leaſt notice of this majeſty of Jeſus Chriſt? And why have none of the Evangeliſts ever mentioned any thing like it? Three of them have uſed no phraſe that would indulge ſuch a wanton imagination. Of which we are abſolutely aſſured. And though *John* has ſome phraſes which are expreſſive of the dignity of our Lord's miſſion and character; yet they are far from admitting any ſuch conſtruction, in a careful view of them. We own, he does, in his introduction, make mention of the creative wiſdom and power, under the term, WORD. But this was a familiar term among the Jews, and underſtood by them to mean nothing more nor leſs, than the authority and energy of God. And ſo the *word of the Lord* gave authority to the prophets of old. It was but natural to St. *John*, who had continued in *Judea* till about the beginning of the Jewiſh wars, when he was writing the life of Chriſt, to uſe a phraſe ſo common among the Jews, to denote the divine miſſion of Jeſus, when he ſais, *the word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us.* i. e. there was all the poſſible evidence given of the divine

divine miſſion of Jeſus. And ſuch were the communications of light, wiſdom and knowledge, that *he had the ſpirit given him without meaſure.* So that the Evangeliſt repreſents him as far ſuperior to all the prophets: for Jeſus could ſay of himſelf, that no *man has aſcended up into heaven, but he who came down from heaven, even the ſon of man who is in heaven.* And when the Jews aſk him, whether he was greater than their father *Abraham?* He replies, *before Abraham was, I am.* Thus plainly aſſerting his being of ſuperior importance, in the ſyſtem, to *Abraham.* And he pleads with God, in his prayer, that he would confer that glory upon him, which he had with him, in his deſign and purpoſe before the world was. — Many other phraſes are peculiar to St. *John*, which have reſpect to the divine miſſion of Jeſus: but which he has abundantly made plain, by giving us thoſe declarations which our Lord makes of his deriving all his wiſdom, and power, and dignity from the father. Expreſsly owning his dependence on him, for all his ſignificance and importance to mankind.

The apoſtles muſt therefore be underſtood in conformity and agreement with theſe Goſpel repreſentations. And when they ſpeak of God's having created all things by Jeſus Chriſt, they can have no ſort of alluſion to the origination of the world; but to a *new creation,*

creation, in which he is made head of all principality, power, and dominion.

This eaſy, familiar, plain, and conſiſtent interpretation, it ſeems will not do; and yet we have ſeen,

The Doctor owning,

" *That God put all things immediately under him, making him head over all, and conſequently entitled him to that worſhip, and to thoſe honours, which were not before paid him.*" p. 55.

In our ſenſe of Scripture, this comes nearer to the truth of the caſe; and is a frank and full acknowledgment of his ſubordinacy and dependency on God. It will prove, he is not God: has no equality with the Father: and is under him as a miniſter, whom he has pleaſed to honour and diſtinguiſh becauſe of his obedience. And indeed the apoſtle has ſhewn, that though *God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name*; that *at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, and every tongue confeſs him Lord* —— yet this is *to the glory of God the Father.*

But how ſhall we be able to underſtand this exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt, which riſes no higher, at its utmoſt, than that of his being *Lord:* and does not ultimately centre in him neither, *but in the* glory of God the Father! This can never conſiſt with his having been the natural Lord of the world, as the Creator of

of all things, and as having appeared in the real majeſty of the Father under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation. We may reaſonably aſk, what now becomes of the Biſhop's diſtinction of nature and office, by which he would artfully gain upon his audience, and divert from the ſight of evidence. What, I ſay, becomes of his diſtinction? Will the Biſhop preſume to ſay, that the exaltation of Jeſus is either ſuperior, or even equal to his glory and dignity as natural Lord from creation, or as having appeared in the real majeſty of the Father? His threefold diſtinction does him no kind of ſervice: for his "*three ſtates of dignity, of humiliation, and of exaltation, which, he ſays, makes all the difficulty vaniſh,*" p. 12. will avail him of no kind of advantage; but is a *whimſy*, that may well be put among the creatures of a fertile and ungoverned imagination. But the Biſhop has been accuſtomed to deal in *ſophiſms*, more than in the rules of ſober and juſt reaſonings. Witneſs his controverſy with HOADLEY.

In the Biſhop's ſcheme, there is a view had to a vicarious ſacrifice, a proper and real propitiation, a reconciliation of God.

"*For it pleaſed the Father, that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell; and having made peace by the blood of his croſs, by him to reconcile all things to himſelf. The ſcheme of thought which runs through this paſſage of ſcripture, ſeems to be this; that as Chriſt was the head of*

of the creation, and made all things, ſo when God thought fit to reſtore the world from ſin, it pleaſed him that Chriſt ſhould be the head alſo of this new work, the firſt-born from the dead himſelf, and the giver of life to every believer: for this purpoſe he made peace by the blood of his croſs, and reconciled all things to God, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Thus much we collect from the apoſtle's reaſoning; and diſcern plainly, that the pre-eminence of Chriſt, as head of the Church, is connected and related to his pre-eminence as head of the creation." p. 84.

But what ſais Doctor *Sherlock?*

" *Natural religion is the foundation upon which revelation ſtands; and therefore revelation can never ſuperſede natural religion, without deſtroying itſelf.*" p. 143.

" *The Goſpel was given not to exclude, but to aſſiſt the exerciſe of reaſon.*" p. 153.

" *The Goſpel has all the perfection requiſite in a law deſigned for the government and inſtruction of rational creatures.*" p. 156.

Theſe ſeveral clear and ſtrong propoſitions of the Doctor's, will allow and countenance our reaſoning on the above obſervation and interpretation of the Biſhop.—And we aſk him theſe queſtions.

How could it pleaſe the Father, that in Jeſus Chriſt ſhould all fulneſs dwell, in conſequence of his having made peace by the blood of his croſs, when there could be nothing

thing real in his humiliation or ſufferings, "*for this very Lord of life, upholding all things by the word of his power, was ſuperior to the neceſſity of human nature, and ſubject to death only becauſe he choſe to die.*" p. 49. Is there any thing in the mere appearance to propitiate an offended Deity? Or, how ſhall we conſider it as the pleaſure of the father, that in Chriſt all fulneſs ſhould dwell, in conſequence of his ſufferings, when he had, under the Old Teſtament, appeared in the real majeſty of the father? Should we not rather conclude, with *Muggleton*, "*that when Jeſus Chriſt died, God died; and then there was no God at all remaining!*" This extravagance does not exceed the interpretations of our Biſhop.

Again, here is nothing, even in this text, which he thought ſo much to his purpoſe, that will favour his interpretation of the Goſpel Scheme, or Chriſt's reconciling God to us. Here, in the text, it is reconciling all things to himſelf. And moreover, this effect is brought about by the blood of his croſs, and therefore all fulneſs does not dwell in Chriſt, as creator; or his pre-eminence is neither connected, nor related to his pre-eminence as original head of the creation. For, if reaſon may be hence aſſiſted in its exerciſe, the exaltation is in reward of his ſufferings; and therefore muſt intend a pre-eminence not in the old, but in a new creation.

The *Biſhop* will not allow that forgiveneſs is inferrable from the mercy and goodneſs of God.—See his reaſoning,

" *The religion of a ſinner muſt be a revealed religion, and the principle of it muſt be faith.*" p. 96.

Dr. *Sherlock* owns,

" Cornelius *was a Gentile, no obſerver of the law of* Moſes." p. 328.

We aſk, whether *Cornelius* could not, did not infer forgiveneſs from the mercy and goodneſs of God? of whom we read, that *He feared God with all his houſe*; and *prayed to God always. And that his prayers and his alms came up for a memorial before God.*—

The Biſhop confronts the Doctor;

" *If you ſay only, that it is probable, that a merciful God will pity the folly and weakneſs of human kind, and recede from the ſtrictneſs of juſtice in his dealings with them; ſo ſay we too: but probability cannot infer neceſſity; and if it be not neceſſary that he ſhould do it, it muſt thus depend upon his will, whether he will do it, or no; and your hopes and your religion muſt be reſolved, not into the evidence of nature, but into the evidence of free grace; which evidence can be no other than revelation; for the ſpirit only ſearcheth the deep things of God, and the ſpirit only can bring them to light.*" p. 97.

But

But Dr. *Sherlock* ſhall aſk the *Biſhop*, what he meaneth by this raving? Is not natural religion the foundation upon which revealed religion ſtands? and therefore revelation can never ſuperſede natural religion without deſtroying itſelf.—

We conclude by the aſſiſtance of the *Doctor*, that this being an eternal truth, it is more than probable, that a merciful and good God will pity the folly and weakneſs of humanity; becauſe in the penitency of the ſinner, and in his reformation, he has peace in his own breaſt, and confidence, or a well grounded hope in his maker. And this is the univerſal tendency of true penitence. What the *Biſhop* meaneth by neceſſity as here contradiſtinguiſhed from probability, is not ſo evident. For its depending on his will, oppoſed to that neceſſity he ſhould pardon, ſeems a very ſilly contraſt. Unleſs the *Biſhop* wants, as I ſuſpect he does, to put the deity under a neceſſity that ſhall be a better and more ſecure foundation of hope and confidence, than the dependence we can have on his will. But what conſideration can be more ſatisfactory than the dependence I may have on the will of a being of invariable and eternal goodneſs, and of unfailing pity and compaſſion? All the hopes of man, and all his religion muſt be reſolved ultimately into the evi-

dence of nature, however the revelation may be made of the grace of God.——It muſt be ſo, if we can at all depend on the truth of thoſe propoſitions laid down by Dr. *Sherlock*, which ſhew the ſupports revelation has on natural religion. And we may add another excellent obſervation of the *Doctor*'s, with which we may cloſe theſe controverſial pages.

" *This aſſurance of God's favour is but one and the ſame thing with what we call a good conſcience: for what force is there in a good conſcience to give us peace, but only this, that it is our teſtimony, that we have faithfully and diligently ſerved our God; which is the ground of our hope and confidence in him?*" p. 249, 250. And again, " *It is worth our while to lay the foundation of this peace betimes, that we may be able to look that day in the face, at which, even at a diſtance, the ſtouteſt heart may tremble: for it is not courage, but folly, not to think of death with ſome concern, ſince ſo much depends from that moment.*" p. 251, 252.

Enough

Enough of the combat: we may upon a review form ſome judgment, and make ſome concluſions.

I. If the *Doctor*'s fundamentals are right, the *Biſhop*'s interpretation of Chriſt's *emptying* himſelf has no foundation in nature, truth or religion. "*For take from the notion of God any of his moral perfections that belong to it, ſuch alteration will influence religion, and degenerate in proportion as the notion of God is corrupted. And a juſt conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by, in all particular matters of religion, and the only thing that can ſecure us from Atheiſm and Superſtition.*"—But the notion of the fall of man being the loſs of ſo many ſubjects to Chriſt, their natural Lord, in virtue of his creating them; muſt be a mere whimſy, a flouriſh of the imagination; eſpecially as we are told, that Jeſus Chriſt appeared under the Old Teſtament in the real majeſty of the Father.

So that the *equality* ſuppoſed, is a corruption of the notion of God. For one all-perfect being can have no equal. And the diſtinction of the glories of nature and office, is to corrupt the notion of God alſo. An *office* implies, according to the idiom of language, ſome public employment, or delegated

legated power, ſome charge given, and can be no ways applicable to the Deity. Indeed the very terms of *humiliation* and *exaltation*, are abſolutely unapplicable to a being of immutable perfection.

Conſequently, the three ſtates have nothing in them that will at all explain the condition of an original creator, who had appeared with the real majeſty of the father. And the *Biſhop* felt the abſurdity when he ſaid, that the very Lord of life, upholding all things by the word of his power, was ſuperior to the neceſſity of human nature. —But how depraved and corrupt the ſentiment, when he added, *ſubject to death, only becauſe he choſe to die.* He that upholds all things by the word of his power choſe to die! What is it that this very artful myſtic divine dare not ſay? What hereſy ever more ſhocking!

II. We may conclude, there is a much better interpretation which may be given of the *emptying*, mentioned by St. *Paul.* One that has no reference to any thing more than the condition of the man Chriſt Jeſus, who, throughout his public miniſtrations, had the preſence of God ſo with him, as that he appeared in the form of God, by miraculous atteſtations which did attend his miſſion: during the exertion of which energy, no hand

hand could faſten on him; and to the withdrawment and ſuſpenſion of which power, he did ſo willingly conſent, which gave the ſuperior merit and luſtre of his obedience, in the dolorous and painful, diſgraceful, and excruciating change of his condition; in which he made himſelf of no reputation, and took on him the form of a ſlave, and was made in the moſt debaſing likeneſs of men; in which condition he humbled himſelf, and became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs. Which was not true of him, till the hour came of the power of darkneſs. For though the *envy* of the great ſought to deſtroy him, yet he appeared with great dignity, and ſuperior glory in the eyes of the people. He had ſo much reputation, that they would gladly have made him their King. And more generally looked upon him with a veneration due to the Son of the moſt high God. This condition of the man Chriſt Jeſus, was not the ſtate of his *humiliation*, but of his God-like miniſtrations, when he went about doing good, and ſpeaking with divine authority. When all nature was doing him homage. This was the ſeaſon, antecedent to his ſufferings, when Jeſus did appear in the form of God, and ſhewed his ſubmiſſion to the will of God, in a reſignation to infamy, inſult and torture. And thus

thus can we underſtand his exaltation as real: and in conſequence of this his exemplary humility, we are able to confeſs him Lord, to the glory of God the father! Thus we avoid the confuſion of human interpretations: do preſerve, juſt and adorable conceptions of the one immutable God; and eſcape thoſe corruptions of the Goſpel Scheme, which tend to Atheiſm and Superſtition.

The E N D.